

that I have been a consistent champion of federalism and localism, self-rule.

He and I agree that those principles are important. My friend from Delaware, being a former Governor himself, understands the sovereignty of the States and the need to respect their judgment.

This is a different circumstance here than that. This would absolutely be inappropriate for us, in any other circumstance, to tell a State or any political subdivision of any State—a city, town, a county, any other subunit of one of our 50 sovereign States—it would be inappropriate for us to weigh in on a local policy issue like this. It is, in fact, part of our constitutional design that each State and each community within each State needs to be able to express itself and make its own decisions based on its own unique preferences.

Here is a very significant difference with respect to the District of Columbia. It has its own provision of the Constitution—in fact, its own clause in article I, section 8, known as the enclave clause. This provision, found in article I, section 8, clause 17, gives Congress exclusive legislative jurisdiction over what we now call the District of Columbia. It wasn't called that in 1787, when they wrote this. It hadn't yet been designed, created, but it described the area to be created out of land donated by one or more States, no more than 10 miles square that would serve as the seat of our national government.

There was an understanding the Founding Fathers had that the seat of government ought not be under the control of any single State, but rather it ought to be in a special status. To that end, the Founding Fathers put ultimate legislative jurisdiction in the hands of Congress, not in that district itself, not in the hands of the States that donated the land to create it, but in Congress.

Now, the DC Home Rule Act, of course, gives substantial authority to the DC City Council and Mayor. As it relates to this legislation, it gives the DC government 30 business days after the passage and enrollment of this legislation, and in that 30 business-day period, Congress has the ability to disapprove of that legislation, which would stop it from being implemented when it is set to take effect on March 18.

Let's remember what we are talking about here. We are talking about the most basic fundamental choice that a parent has relative to his or her child: the authority and the discretion to decide when, whether, how, and under what circumstances and what time certain medical procedures may be performed on the child. You might disagree with the medical judgment of a particular parent and at a particular moment, but I am not aware of any State that would make the decision on a statewide basis to take this choice away from parents and to say that a child as young as 11 years old could

make his or her own choice and not only deprive a child's parents from being able to make that decision but also be able to deprive that child's parents from ever even learning about it. These things are sometimes not without consequence.

Imagine, for example, a circumstance in which the parents are aware of some particular medical condition, a medical procedure that this child has recently had. Imagine circumstances in which a child's siblings or the child him or herself had previously reacted to a particular vaccination in a particular way or imagine a circumstance in which religious considerations come into play. Do we really want to deprive parents of the ability to make that decision?

I am not aware of any State legislature that would make that choice. I certainly hope they wouldn't. But regardless, and even though this would not be our choice, this would not be within our authority if it were not within the District of Columbia and, therefore, within our plenary legislative jurisdiction under the enclave clause to make this decision from Congress. It is our decision here because, at the end of the day, the DC government itself is acting on authority delegated to it by the Congress.

So whether you like it or not, whether you like, in the abstract, the idea of localism either as embodied in federalism or even more generally than that, you can't escape the fact that under our constitutional system, we are the lawmaker for DC, no less than any State's legislature is the legislative body for that State. If you choose not to decide here, you still have made a choice. You still have made a choice to approve of that legislative body stripping away critical protections, critical rights that parents have. We have made that decision not just because it sounds like the right thing to do, but anyone who has ever been a parent understands that it has to be the parent's choice. A parent has to be in a position of making these decisions and, at least, for crying out loud, be made aware of this. This takes away not only their authority or their rights but even their awareness of what has happened to their child.

So, yes, I understand the concerns of localism. They simply don't apply here.

Under our constitutional system, under the Constitution itself, the document to which we all have sworn an oath to uphold, protect, and defend, this is not a State decision.

To the extent it is a decision for the DC government, for the DC City Council, and Mayor, that is authority that we have delegated to the District, and it is authority that is ultimately ours. We are ultimately answerable to the people, to those who have elected us, to make sure that is exercised responsibly.

So if you don't like the fact that we are doing this—for that matter, if you don't like the policy of this, if you as a State lawmaker wouldn't be com-

fortable with this policy being adopted in your State—you have not only every right and every authority, but I believe you have a moral obligation to stand up to this piece of legislation. Do not let this kick in on March 18. This is wrong. It is not something we have to accept, and it is certainly not something that the Constitution even allows, much less compels.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from West Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO DONNA BOLEY

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, today I rise to speak on a couple of topics, but first, I want to take this opportunity to thank really an icon in our State, and that is West Virginia State Senate Pro Tempore Donna Boley. She is a good friend of mine, and she is now in her 10th term. She is the longest continuously serving member in our State's State senate. At one point in history, Donna Boley was the only Republican. She was the ranking member on every single committee and the lead Republican, as she was the only one in the early nineties.

I want to thank her for her service, for her service to our State, which began in 1985, and wish her all the best as she presides today—she is presiding today—over the West Virginia State Senate.

So, Donna, way to go. Really proud of you. You are a role model for every woman who is watching and certainly young girls as well.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, I also rise to join my colleagues to discuss the Democrats' so-called COVID-19 relief package.

Prior to this past round, Congress has been delivering much needed relief, as you know—five times since the beginning of this pandemic—with bipartisan support.

In this last month, my Republican colleagues and I put forth a targeted proposal, presented to President Biden in the Oval Office. He invited 10 of us over, and we had a great discussion. It wasn't just a plan, but it was a plan to work together, to be united and move forward in an area that we have had great bipartisan consensus.

Let's be clear. We don't disagree on the need for continued relief and resources, but it needs to be done in a targeted way. Throwing money randomly will not fix it, especially when some of these funds that are still being spent—that we speak of right now haven't been spent yet. And taking the opportunity to spend on favorite projects is not the intention of a COVID relief package.

In December of 2020—that wasn't that long ago, 2 months ago—we passed the most recent recovery efforts, which amounted to approximately \$90 billion in relief funds. President Biden's relief plan takes none of that into consideration. They don't take into full account a sufficient understanding that the impacts of that bill from just 2 months ago have yet to be felt. Instead, it force-feeds funds and radical

policy ideas into a framework under the guise of COVID relief.

Let's just take our schools, for example. Everybody is frustrated because our schools aren't open and our students are falling behind. Congress last year appropriated \$68 billion for K-12 schools, but of this amount, only \$5 billion of that—5 billion of the 68—has been spent so far. According to the Congressional Budget Office, of the almost \$129 billion for K-12 schools included in this Biden COVID relief plan, only \$6.4 billion of that is planned to be distributed through September of this year. The remaining \$122 billion will not go to schools until the fiscal years 2022 through 2028. Now, we are being sold this program because it is an emergency. Well, I don't know how you predict an emergency in the year 2028. This cannot possibly qualify as emergency spending.

Here are some of the other areas where funds have yet to be spent:

Of the \$13 billion provided in our December plan for our agriculture community, only \$11.5 billion—no, excuse me, \$11.5 billion of the \$13 billion has yet to be obligated. That is not even spent; that is obligated.

Roughly \$14 billion in appropriated funding for COVID testing has not yet been obligated, and that is an extremely important part, and that is—less than 10 percent of this plan are things like testing, vaccines, and therapeutics.

Twenty-one States have actually experienced revenue growth compared to 2019, 2020. Yet this bill expends \$350 billion to States. This money needs to be targeted. The parameters created in this category alone reward States that were more restrictive in their economic decisions and heavily weighted towards highly populated States. That is not my State. My friend here from Montana, that is not his State. And the parameters of this are so loose that I can't imagine what projects will be dreamed up to be spent on.

As of January 19, none of the \$27 billion provided by the Department of Transportation in December, 2 months ago, under the Consolidated Appropriations Act has been obligated. Yet there is more money in there for this as well.

Also important to note is that the President's plan includes many provisions that really have nothing to do with COVID relief—nothing—but this is a COVID relief package. From an \$86 billion bailout of union pensions to \$100 million—over \$100 million, actually—for a subway project in California, to funds provided to advance portions of President Biden's recent climate Executive order and environmental justice priorities, these are some of the items in here that have nothing to do with coronavirus relief. These extra wish list items make his plan more expensive and more partisan.

To make matters worse, my friends on the other side of the aisle have decided to do this in the most partisan way possible: reconciliation. Using this

process risks wasting millions of dollars without the standard procedures that we go through on the Appropriations Committee and other committees. This bill hasn't even touched a committee over here in the Senate. But it goes without the standard policy guardrails and provisions that, when we work together, we ensure that the money is put to its intended use. We are creating slush funds in the name of COVID relief.

Bottom line: This will be a fiscally wasteful product.

There are good things in here that we all agreed on that the 10 who went to the White House to talk about and many of us have provided in the last five bills.

Many Americans will be getting checks, and while I agree with this, all of this would be better in a bill that we agreed on and that we negotiated.

We are risking a potential economic recovery with continued massive spending. As I have said time and again in my 5-minute speech all over the State of West Virginia, we all agree on continued COVID relief. However, we need to do this in a targeted, fiscally responsible—and working together, like we have the last five times. Doing so allows us to effectively help individuals, families, and businesses that need help the most—and there are many out there that do, and they need it yesterday; we know that—while also considering what other impacts might be happening as we throw over a trillion extra dollars to unrelated COVID relief items.

With that, I am in opposition to the bill, in case you couldn't tell.

Now I see my friend from Montana is here, but I want to thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, well, I want to thank my colleague from West Virginia, Senator CAPITO, for clearly laying out her concerns with this COVID package.

I think about where we were a year ago. We were right here in this Chamber. It was March of 2020, and we were debating, working together in a bipartisan fashion to come up with a major—over \$2 trillion—COVID relief package.

In fact, if we look back over the course of the last 12 months, Congress passed five bipartisan COVID-19 relief packages—five of them. During that time, as we know, the Republicans were in the majority in the Senate, and we believed it was very important—we were dealing with COVID challenges in our country—that we come together in a bipartisan way to address this horrible pandemic. It didn't stop us from working with our colleagues across the aisle to reach a compromise in order to get needed relief for Montanans and the American people who were struggling because of the pandemic.

Bipartisanship—it takes work. It takes both sides coming together. It

takes a little more time as well. But for the good of Montanans and for the good of the American people, they expect that of us here in the Senate.

Unfortunately, what we are witnessing today is that “bipartisanship” is no longer in the vocabulary of President Biden and the Democrats. They have taken this bipartisan process that we have had over the course of the last 12 months and they have taken it hostage. It has become their way or the highway. Take it or leave it. They are trying to jam through a hyperpartisan—not a bipartisan but a hyperpartisan \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 package.

We shouldn't even call this a COVID-19 relief package, and here is why: Ninety percent of what is in it has nothing to do with the core health needs of combating COVID-19. Nothing. This nearly \$2 trillion package is nothing more than a Pelosi payoff, a liberal wish list that gives President Biden, NANCY PELOSI, and CHUCK SCHUMER billions of dollars for these partisan pet projects.

This COVID-19 relief package includes a laundry list of liberal priorities. Now, I am not making this up. What I am about to share was actually included in the most recently passed package of this COVID legislation out of the U.S. House, which, by the way, passed in the wee hours of the morning this past weekend, on Saturday, when the American people were asleep, and it was not supported by a single Republican Member.

By the way, contrast that to where we were a year ago. We passed a huge COVID package here in the U.S. Senate 96 to zero. You can't get any more bipartisan than that. Yet, when they jammed this package in the House Saturday morning, not a single Republican supported it. In fact, a couple Democrats opposed it.

Here is what is in that so-called relief package for COVID-19:

One hundred million dollars for NANCY PELOSI's train to nowhere. It is a Silicon Valley underground rail project to help Big Tech. You tell me what that has to do with COVID-19.

Three hundred fifty billion dollars to bail out blue States that had financial problems before the pandemic. Now, Montana should not be footing the bill to bail out States like New York, California, and Illinois, especially when we have seen reports that States are actually doing much better than projected when we look at revenues coming in in 2020. In fact, listen to this, California is projecting a \$25 billion surplus in 2020.

There is \$50 million in this package for “climate justice.”

There are millions in bailouts for Planned Parenthood. It also makes Planned Parenthood eligible for taxpayer dollars through the Paycheck Protection Program.

Now, there is \$130 billion in there for schools. Now hear this: 95 percent of it won't be spent this year. In fact, 95 percent of it is spent in years 2022 through

2028. You tell me what that has to do with this immediate rush to get this package passed when most of the spending is in the years out to 2028. This is ironic, as President Biden and the Democrats are bowing to political pressure from the teachers unions to keep kids out of the classroom.

I cannot tell you how many parents we are hearing from who want to see the schools opened up and want to see the kids back in school, back in the classroom.

They support opening the southern border for illegal immigrants over opening schools for American students.

As I have laid out, President Biden, NANCY PELOSI, and CHUCK SCHUMER's COVID-19 package is not about COVID-19 relief at all. In fact, the White House Chief of Staff, Ron Klain, said this: "This is the most progressive domestic legislation in a generation."

I believe that. This is all about political favors for Democrats. It is about cashing in on campaign promises, and it is outrageous. While Democrats are trying to further their liberal agenda under the guise of passing COVID-19 relief, we are sitting on \$1 trillion of unspent, already allocated COVID-19 relief dollars from the prior five packages.

In fact, of the last package we passed in December of \$900 billion, only about 50 percent of that—allocated dollars—is out the door.

So shoveling out almost \$2 trillion—and how much is \$2 trillion? The entire annual Federal discretionary budget of the U.S. Government is about \$1.4 trillion—the entire discretionary budget.

The Democrats want to push another \$2 trillion into this economy that is poised to rebound as businesses reopen. It is deeply irresponsible. It will needlessly cause our debt to soar to new heights and could harm our economic recovery by sparking inflation. Its partisanship is exceeded only by its recklessness.

The American comeback is well underway. Our economy is rebounding. GDP is expected to grow 10 percent by the end of the first quarter. Personal saving rates are way up—20.5 percent this past January, compared to 7.6 percent in prepandemic January 2020. Manufacturing is at its highest growth level since August of 2018.

Vaccines are being distributed and hospitalizations are going down. In fact, hospitalizations are down nearly 20 percent this week versus last week, looking across the country. In fact, more than 40 percent of those over the age of 65 are vaccinated with at least one dose. That is good news.

On vaccines, I want to recognize our Governor back home in Montana, Governor Gianforte, for his outstanding leadership on getting vaccines distributed across Montana. I also want to thank Montana's healthcare heroes for their dedication to getting the vaccines out and keeping our communities and our families safe.

In fact, just last week, Montana was recognized as the most efficient State

in the Nation—No. 1 out of 50—for administering vaccines received from the Federal Government. But in Montana, we are in need of more vaccines. That is why I joined forces with the Governor and Congressman ROSENDALE, requesting them from President Biden. I am pleased to see that it was announced just this week that Montana will be receiving 8,000 doses of the J&J vaccine in the coming days.

Vaccines and vaccine distribution are what we should be focusing on now. They are what will help us get life back to normal. They are what will end this pandemic. Yet, sadly, only 1 percent of Biden and PELOSI's COVID-19 package goes to vaccines. That is unacceptable. It is unacceptable that the partisan Pelosi-Schumer bill lacks foresight and badly misdiagnoses what America needs now, because we are seeing the light at the end of this tunnel. We must keep moving in this direction. Any future relief must be targeted and focused on vaccine distribution.

Let's just start by retargeting the \$1 trillion that is not even yet out the door. Why don't we start there? But, instead, the Democrats continue to go their own way in a purely partisan piece of legislation to spend another \$1.9 trillion, most of which does not address anything related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It must be directed instead toward ending the pandemic, helping the American people, not supporting the liberal dreams of NANCY PELOSI and CHUCK SCHUMER.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the \$1.9 trillion spending bill that we expect we will be considering probably starting tomorrow.

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted our communities, causing heartbreak and grief for hundreds of thousands of families who have lost loved ones. At the same time, it has turned our economy upside down, and it has shuttered small business, as well as schools and churches.

Without a doubt, it is during a pandemic that we here in Congress should be coming together and working to provide relief for those who are struggling, and it is for that very reason that I am proud that Republicans and Democrats have worked together. We worked together over the past year on a very bipartisan basis—a bipartisan basis—to pass five different pieces of legislation to address the pandemic.

In March of 2020, we passed the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act by a vote of 96 to 1. We passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act by a vote of 90 to 8, and the landmark Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or the CARES Act, which is the one I think most people are very familiar with. That provided \$2.2 trillion in relief, and it passed the Senate unanimously. It got every Republican and every Democratic vote.

Last summer, we unanimously passed legislation making adjustments to the Paycheck Protection Program, providing further support for our small businesses and additional funding for hospitals, for healthcare providers, as well as for COVID-19 testing. We passed it unanimously.

In late December, just over 2 months ago, we provided an additional \$900 billion in relief, including direct payments to individuals, \$120 billion in additional unemployment insurance, \$25 billion in rental assistance, \$25 billion in nutrition and ag assistance for our farmers, and \$325 billion in additional support for small businesses—again, with an overwhelming bipartisan vote—bipartisan. All five of these were passed with big bipartisan votes—some of them unanimously—and much of that money has yet to be spent.

Now Democrats in Congress and the administration want to pass, on a partisan basis with only Democratic votes, a massive \$1.9 trillion bill with no input from Republicans, unlike the previous COVID-19 relief bills that we worked together on to pass to respond to this COVID epidemic.

In the House, the bill passed. It didn't get any Republican votes, and it didn't even get all the Democratic votes. It was passed solely with Democratic votes, no Republican votes, and some Democrats voting against it as well. And, again, we haven't even spent the \$900 billion we just passed on a bipartisan basis in December.

Also, the bill includes billions in spending for nonpandemic-related programs, including \$480 million for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

As a matter of fact, here is just some of the things in here that don't relate to COVID: \$50 million for "climate justice," \$50 million for family planning funding without the Hyde protections, \$112 million for Speaker PELOSI's Silicon Valley subway, \$135 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities, \$135 million for the National Endowment for the Arts, \$200 million for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, \$12 billion in foreign aid, and \$30 billion for public transit, of which \$4.5 billion is for New York City's subway system. How does that relate to addressing COVID?

Again, like I said, we just passed \$900 billion in December, which has yet to be spent, that does address COVID. So we need to focus on spending the money that we have already provided. We need to make sure that it gets to the needs. We need to get our economy opened up. We need to get our kids back in school. Those are the priorities right now.

And then, when we look at this bill, in addition to spending on things that aren't related to COVID, let's also look at how the funding is allocated. The bill provides \$350 billion in funding to States, Territories, and localities. But

it is not based on population. Instead, it is based on unemployment. Well, that unfairly awards the States that shut down over those that stayed open. And the reality is that what we really need to do is get the vaccine out so, again, we can open up our businesses and make sure we get our kids in school. That has got to be the priority now. But how do you go forward with that kind of a formula that isn't fairly delivered as well?

Under this flawed methodology, in this bill the city of New York would receive about \$4.3 billion. That is actually more than 36 States would get. Also, the city of Chicago would receive \$1.98 billion. There are 20 States that wouldn't get that amount. Los Angeles would receive \$1.35 billion, which is more than 13 different States would receive. In addition, L.A. County would receive \$1.95 billion, bringing that valley's total to \$3.3 billion. Why is that the allocation formula?

Republicans stand ready to work with our Democratic colleagues to provide the necessary support to fill in any remaining gaps and provide targeted COVID-19 relief to our healthcare workers, continue vaccine distribution, safely reopen our schools, and provide help for those in our communities who are struggling the most. But we cannot support this \$1.9 trillion partisan bill which will add to our national debt on the backs of hard-working Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I rise today to keep fighting for those who are still hurting from this plague. I am fighting for those who have yet to receive the vaccine, and I am fighting for those who are not back to work. I am fighting to protect Medicare dollars.

But do you know who I am really here to speak for today? My three grandsons. I actually received a phone call this morning from two of them—actually, a FaceTime—and they wanted to share a story with me of a fish they caught last night. I am here to protect their future and to make sure that someday their grandkids will be able to call them and talk about a great moment in their lives.

Certainly, I am here to fight to get our children back to school, but do you know what I believe is the largest threat to their future, to their dreams, and to their success? It is the national debt. It is not just a threat to their education. It is a threat to the infrastructure they will be using for the next 20 years of their life, as well as a threat to the national security of their families.

Now, without question, I am here to fight for those who need the help now, but I am also called to help the future of our country, and our children and our grandchildren are the future of this country.

As everybody in this room knows, we have already borrowed \$4 trillion—\$4

trillion—from our grandchildren to fight this virus. But over \$1 trillion remains on the sideline and is yet to be spent. Now, my suggestion is, Why don't we start by repurposing those dollars and target them where they are needed the most, which is exactly what we would do in the business world from which I came very recently?

Look, this great American economy is coming back. The long, dark, cold winter is almost over. Unemployment is under 4 percent in Kansas and many other States, and it looks like we are going to have a strong first-quarter GDP number.

Now, as an aside, I have to highlight, though, the way this partisan bill is written, it rewards those States that overreacted and totally shut down their economies and their schools. Bailing out mismanaged States at the expense of taxpayers is simply not American.

If this administration and our Governors do their job, we can have nationwide herd immunity by April or May, and, by summer, our economy can be back to prepandemic levels, all without borrowing another \$2 trillion from our grandchildren. That comes out to \$6,000 to each child and to each one of your grandchildren—\$6,000 we want to borrow. So walk up to your children or to your grandchildren and say: Hey, we want to borrow \$6,000 from you to help bail out some mismanaged governments.

So, listen, we truly want to help those who need the help. And I ask my colleagues across the aisle: Why do you want to borrow another \$2 trillion from our grandchildren and only spend 9 percent—only 9 percent—on direct COVID relief? We simply cannot print enough money up here to solve these problems long term unless we lock in on the real, most pressing challenges.

This is what we need to do to defeat the virus, and it is very simple: get shots into arms, get people back to work, and get our kids in school. If we do these three things, our economy and Republic will come booming back.

Call this bill in front of us what you want: a boondoggle, a Christmas tree—a Christmas tree decorated with earmarks as ornaments and full of so much pork, it is dripping grease.

My friends across the aisle focused 91 percent of their attention in this bill to pay for things like a bridge from New York to Canada and an underground railroad project in Silicon Valley, money for Planned Parenthood, and stimulus checks for illegal immigrants and violent criminals.

Now, you can argue for this loan from our grandchildren, if you would like and if you don't care about their future, but at the end of the day, we are trying to borrow \$2 trillion from our grandchildren to spend on partisan pet projects, and I will never agree to that.

Let me stress once more what I am for: getting vaccines into arms, getting people back to work, and getting kids back to school.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in the discussion over the relief package we are going to be voting on later this week.

We need to go back to last year and recognize what happened in this Chamber on five different occasions. I have been in the Senate now for 6 years, and very seldom do we see both parties come together and recognize we have a problem and we have to relieve the American people.

We had a historic pandemic, first of its kind, in 100 years. COVID hit our shores. What did we do? We spent days and weeks, but over the course of those days and weeks, we came together with five bipartisan packages that really address the root problems and the challenges created by COVID.

We passed the Paycheck Protection Program, something that I think was extraordinary. The banking community got together even before we had the rules on how the loan should be underwritten and how they would be forgiven, and they decided to mobilize and provide desperately needed capital and liquidity to businesses, and they saved many, many businesses in North Carolina.

We passed Operation Warp Speed, a program that for the first time in this Nation's history, or any nation's history, we went from a known virus to two multiple vaccines with high degrees of efficacy that are now being put into the arms of Americans at a rate of almost 2 million a day. We did that because we focused on a problem and we fixed it and we continue to evolve it—five different bipartisan bills.

Now the sixth one is before us. It is called a COVID relief package, but we all know that much of what is in this bill has nothing to do with the COVID impacts and nothing to do with the immediate spending in this coming year.

Now, I understand elections have consequences. It has been said by President Obama and others, and we have a change of leadership here in the Senate and change of leadership in the White House. But I really hate that we are going to leave a mark. Probably, and hopefully, the last COVID—the last bill that would have some COVID relief in it is going to go down as one of the most probably partisan fights that we are going to have this year on this floor later this week.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle decided to go it alone. That is exactly what you are going to see in full display come Thursday this week when we go into what we call vote-arama.

I feel like we have to be intellectually honest with the American people. We know that we have to provide more relief. We know that people are struggling, businesses are struggling, individuals are struggling, and I get all that, and that is why I wish so much that we were going to have another bill

laid down on the floor that was going to get strong bipartisan support. But to call this bill that is coming before us this week a COVID relief package, I think, is being dishonest with the American people.

This chart probably best illustrates what the American people need to understand. That is how much is in this bill that is legitimately focused on the crisis that we are trying to continue to manage through very targeted, focused dollars—American taxpayer dollars—that in this case, as some of my colleagues have said, they are not even dollars we have collected yet. We are going to collect them from my two granddaughters and future generations: a \$1.9 trillion package with about 9 percent going to something that you could reasonably argue has a nexus with the impact of COVID, whether it is on individuals, whether it is people out of work, or whether it is businesses that are trying to make payroll. That is a fact, 9 percent.

Now, I feel like at some point we need to get back to what we did on five different occasions before. We knew businesses were failing. They needed relief. We gave them the Paycheck Protection Program. We knew that people were out of work because of business closures. Maybe you had to take off work because you didn't have daycare because your school was closed. All of those are legitimate reasons to provide additional relief. That is what we should be voting on this week, and in small part we are, but in large part we are not.

I think it was someone in the Obama administration who was famously quoted for saying: "Never waste a crisis." And it looks like, to me, that this crisis is being used to advance policy discussions that we should have a debate on the floor, but we are not going to have that. We are going to have a vote with a simple majority, not rising to the gold standard in this institution for 60 votes, and we are going to pass things that have virtually nothing and, in most cases, absolutely nothing to do with COVID.

How on Earth can you provide education funding and say that you are doing it for COVID impacts, and much of that money—the majority of the money—is not even going to be spent until beginning in 2022 and then playing out in 2028? How can you say that has anything to do with the immediate crisis of getting these kids back in school, making sure that teachers are safe, and making sure that we can recover from what I think will be irreparable damage for a number of students who have never been allowed to go back into school?

When we talk about the economic stimulus payments, there are a lot of people who need help. There are a lot of people who need a check. But the proposal that I have seen, the proposal we are going to vote on this week, is giving money to people who would like it.

I can understand why it is very popular. Who wouldn't, in this Chamber,

want to think that they are going to get a \$3,000 or \$4,000 check in the mail—whether you were out of work at all, whether your combined household income is \$150,000, and you are still working. You weren't impacted by it. I understand why it is popular. But is it really fair?

You know, there is a trailer park in Antioch, TN, on Richards Road. I grew up in it, and I ride there when I go visit my family. I go back and visit with people who live in that trailer park. My guess is almost every single one of them need help, and my guess is many of them who work in the service industry have been out of work for the better part of the last year. We should tell them: You are going to get some help, but that neighborhood that is about a mile down the road from that trailer park I grew up in, where you have got combined household incomes of \$150,000, both the husband and wife are working, both of the kids have daycare options, they are going to get it too. Is it really fair for the people who are struggling the most? Is it really fair to say that we are providing education relief, and it is not going to be spent until I would have to run for reelection again in 2028?

I think we need to be honest with the American people. If we want to have a debate about all of the red, all of the money that is going to be committed this week that has nothing to do with COVID relief, let's be honest with the American people. What we are doing this week, I think, is dishonest.

What we are doing this week is bailing out States like my State of North Carolina, a \$4 billion surplus this year; bailing out the States of North Carolina, New York, Illinois, California, instead of trying to use that money, which we don't have—but if we need to spend it, let's spend it on those folks who grew up like I did. Let's spend it on the businesses that may shutter their doors. Let's do that. Let's let that be the sixth bipartisan COVID-relief package that we put together, not what we are going to be forced to vote on this week.

I hope the American people know we recognize—we Republicans recognize people are hurting, and we want to give them help. We have proven that because we voted in five different instances, on a bipartisan basis, to do that. What the leadership of this Chamber is doing this week is taking us down a course to where we will probably never have a chance to come back together and have that kind of bipartisan result for this crisis or future ones.

So I am going to work hard on amendments to potentially tailor and remove some of the red. In the meantime, I think anybody who supports the bill that is coming over from the House should seriously consider whether they are being honest with the American people and their constituents.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, with a one-party monopoly of Washington, DC, Democrats are back to their old spending habits. Most of the \$1.9 trillion within the Democrats' "COVID" package has absolutely nothing to do with COVID.

Unlike the previous five pandemic relief bills that were approved with overwhelming bipartisan support, Democrats have shown no interest in working with Republicans and are instead fast-tracking this highly partisan bill through Congress.

Now, the bulk of this budget-busting bill is devoted to fulfilling a wish list of longtime liberal priorities, including billion-dollar bailouts, progressive program expansions, and pricey partisan pet projects.

And let's talk about a few of those. Look at this right here, a New York bridge to Canada. That is \$1.5 billion for a bridge connecting the State of New York to, yes, another country, Canada.

What about this one: the cleverly worded provision that earmarks—yes, I said it, folks. Earmarking is already happening right here—\$140 million to a subway in Silicon Valley in California. What does that have to do with COVID?

And a whopping \$350 billion blue-State bailout that rewards the States that have imposed the strictest lockdowns. Folks, we should be rewarding the States that demonstrated leadership by finding ways to safely stay open, not those that shut down our schools, closed our businesses, and killed our American jobs.

But, most importantly, COVID relief should stay focused on COVID. There is still about \$1 trillion of COVID funding that Congress previously approved that hasn't even been spent yet. Yes, folks, \$1 trillion. So why in the world are we looking at spending yet another \$2 trillion, of course, on things that are not even related to COVID?

That isn't to say that there aren't needs, because there are. We know that all across our country. But instead of bridges and bailouts, the money should be focused on immediate help to get our moms and dads back to work. And to do that, we need to do a few things: No. 1, let's safely reopen our schools. Let's, No. 2, expand access to quality, affordable childcare. And, No. 3, let's distribute the vaccine as quickly as possible.

While the bill does actually provide some assistance for these purposes, even here, the Democrats show how out of touch they are with what is actually happening on the ground.

For example, nearly \$15 billion is included for the childcare and development block grant. You would think that is a good thing because it is needed. At a time when so many moms are being forced to choose between their careers and children as a result of school closures, the support is needed. But a loophole in the bill that is coming over from the House allows millionaires to use up this program, which

was created to make quality childcare affordable for working parents who are struggling to make ends meet. Yes, millionaires qualify for this assistance, not just our struggling families. And while additional funding will certainly help many, expanding eligibility to those millionaires who have the financial means to afford their own nannies will not.

While the bill also extends the unemployment benefit, and it does provide an extra \$400 per week for those who are out of work because of the pandemic—there, again, another loophole—there is no limit placed on the eligibility. That means someone who may be out of work but is still earning \$1 million or more qualifies for these bonus payments.

Now, you might laugh—you might laugh—and ask: How many people would apply for unemployment assistance if they were making \$1 million? Well, folks, the answer is thousands.

During the great recession just a decade ago, more than 3,000 individuals with adjusted gross incomes of \$1 million collected unemployment benefits. Because this bill doesn't cap who may receive support, jobless millionaires may end up collecting as much as \$1 million in enhanced unemployment assistance every week. This is like a reverse millionaires' tax. The Democrats are paying millionaires not to work with taxes paid by lower income workers. How do you like that socialist scheme?

So if you are a coastal elite living in California or New York and maybe making a million bucks despite being out of work, this bill is especially generous for you.

But, folks, this isn't Monopoly money. This is the real deal, and someone has to eventually pick up the tab. Sadly, it is going to be paid out of the pockets of essential workers and others who are continuing to work, those who pay taxes and keep America running.

Now, as an eternal optimist, I am hopeful that when this bill comes before the Senate, my Democratic colleagues will actually work with us to cut the pork and refocus the bill on what it should be focused on: the immediate needs of the COVID pandemic—not a fancy subway, not a bridge to Canada, and, certainly, not wealthy State bailouts. Focus on the immediate needs of the COVID pandemic.

And if not, I am afraid the Democrats will just keep passing go and collecting hundreds of dollars from hard-working taxpayers across this country, only to pay for their pricey partisan pet projects and wish-list items that have nothing to do with COVID.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. I don't rise today, Mr. President, in opposition to COVID relief, nor do I rise today to oppose money for vaccine distribution and

testing, nor do I rise to oppose stimulus spending for those who really need it—our hard-hit businesses, rank-and-file fellow Americans—and I certainly don't rise to oppose additional grants and loans for other enterprises out there that just aren't going to be able to make it through this, like our not-for-profits that are essential to all of our communities. But I rise today, instead, to oppose this partisan, pork-filled American Rescue Plan.

You know, I am not known for histrionics in this body, and I am not engaging in them. This is a partisan bill full of a liberal wish list of items that, frankly, aren't popular with Hoosiers, and they won't be popular with the American people the more they get to know about what is loaded up in this \$1.9 trillion package of goodies.

In the last year, during a time of political division and strife, this Congress came together around COVID relief. We rose to the challenge presented to us by this global pandemic. We didn't bring it on. By most accounts, it came from China. But we came together to address this foreign threat that came to our shores that has decimated our economy, that has threatened lives and livelihoods, and we passed 5 relief measures with well more than 90 votes in every instance.

The total, nearly \$3.5 trillion—and I make no apologies for those investments. Those were investments in public health. Those were investments in our communities. Those were investments in our employers. Those were investments in our loved ones, to provide them safety and security and a measure of comfort but to save their very lives. These are investments in our frontline workers. We did all of that in a bipartisan fashion with very little opposition—very little opposition.

Unity, that is what this country needs. I heard that coming from the lips of Republicans and Democrats alike at the highest levels weeks ago, and that is what I pine for. I want our country to be unified. I believe we can be unified. But this is not a step in the right direction.

Even though much of the money that we have allocated to address the many consequences of this global pandemic has not been spent yet, we Republicans have tried to work with the Biden administration on a sixth relief package over the past month. In fact, I was 1 of 10 Republicans who—I say this commendably toward the Biden administration; specifically, I commend the President for inviting myself and nine other Republicans into the Oval Office to discuss our counterproposal.

And I have to say, the \$600 billion proposal that we were providing was, for this U.S. Senator, a bit of a stretch. You know, so much money was still in the pipeline, it wasn't even clear that that much was needed. But we certainly did not need \$1.9 trillion, and we all agreed upon that.

Unfortunately, we sort of left that meeting with a supposition that, unfor-

tunately, has been substantiated, that there was an intention to move forward, regardless of the respectful and fact-based exchange we had about the wastefulness of the \$1.9 trillion package and the extent to which the \$600 billion package more than met the needs of getting people vaccinated, getting people back to work, and getting our kids back to school as safely and as quickly as possible.

Here we are, though. Instead of a targeted relief package, we have seen our Democratic leaders load up a \$1.9 trillion bill with wish-list items.

And so here is what I am going to have to educate Hoosiers on in the coming months because I think they actually believe this is mostly about vaccination and getting kids back to school and getting people back to work—and I wish that were the case. But, no, it is about borrowing money so that we can pay for I think what can fairly be characterized as a Blue State bailout to the tune of \$350 billion.

You see, a lot of States aren't like the State of Indiana. The State of Indiana, over the years, has balanced our budget and come up with a rainy day fund. And we are criticized, oftentimes for not spending money out of that rainy day fund. But the rainiest of days hit, and Indiana was ready. Not every State did that. Many States have elected leaders who have made unfulfillable promises to their constituency over the years related to their retirements and so forth. So now, in this package, is \$350 billion going toward those States to be used for purposes other than pandemic relief.

Also in this bill, \$1.9 trillion package, is a Silicon Valley subway. I am not sure how it got in there. I do know that Speaker PELOSI hails from the area.

The National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities—I love arts; I love the humanities. We can debate the proper role of government in funding these public cultural goods, but let's do it some other time. Let's not do it in the course of pandemic relief legislation.

Expansion of the Paycheck Protection Program to provide loans to Planned Parenthood, will force certain taxpayers, like myself, to violate our conscience—much, much more. It is full of waste. It is fat with waste.

This body passed a \$1.9 trillion CARES Act in March of 2020.

One year later, Democrats, along party lines, are poised to jam through another \$1.9 trillion package. To give you some sense of how much a trillion dollars is—these numbers can be abstract sometimes—try to visualize \$1 bills stacked from the ground halfway up to the moon. That is a trillion dollars, I was told earlier today. That is a lot of money, and we are borrowing every cent of it.

I think it is important we consider the difference between what we passed a year ago and what we are now considering as likely to pass along party-line votes. When the CARES Act went into

effect, the Nation was shut down. Only so-called essential businesses, businesses that could operate safely, were open.

Indiana's unemployment rate then was 17.5 percent. We have done a great job managing this crisis in the State of Indiana. Most businesses are reopened. The unemployment rate is 3.4 percent in our State. We don't have the same public health challenges of other places that have shut everything down. I will let others try and define why that is.

When the CARES Act became law, not a single school in Indiana was open, and in Indiana today most schools are open to in-person learning, in-person instruction, many full time. And let me take this opportunity to commend our administrators and our teachers in the State of Indiana for showing up for work. We don't see that all around the country. Last week, in more than 2,000 schools in Indiana, there were only 62 teacher cases. I told you basically all the schools have opened up. Only 62 teacher cases in Indiana. That is one case for every 33 schools. I would say we are doing a pretty good job managing the risk, following the science.

When the CARES Act became law, a vaccine was a far-off dream. I can remember President Trump indicating there would be a vaccine by year's end. People laughed. Democrats scoffed, mocked. Members of the media mocked him. Not only do we have one vaccine, but then comes vaccine number two and vaccine number three, all in the pipeline because of Operation Warp Speed that the Trump administration implemented to, at once, streamline the regulatory process for approval and also begin manufacturing in parallel. It is good that the Biden administration is building on those successes.

So, look, there is no doubt that some Hoosiers and many Americans are still hurting. We can and we will and we must help those people, but President Biden and the national Democrats' so-called American Rescue Plan is not the way to do it. It just is not responsible. We are better than that.

So we who oppose this, we who happen to be Republican U.S. Senators who oppose this partisan effort to use this crisis to advance initiatives like arts funding and a subway next to Speaker PELOSI's district, along partisan lines, we are not going to just let this pass and allow the national Democrats to cram unrelated policies into what should be a bill squarely targeted at this crisis. We need a bill just like the five bills that we passed in a strongly bipartisan fashion just last year.

So today we have more than a million Hoosiers who have received their first dose of vaccine, including more than 70 percent of Hoosiers age 70 and older. There is no doubt that some Hoosiers are still hurting. Again, we will be helping those folks.

So this is really quite simple. We need to work together, Republicans

and Democrats, for the good of the country. This does indeed remain a national crisis. We had negative economic growth last year because a global pandemic interrupted the greatest period of economic growth in my lifetime.

We need to recover. We are poised for a recovery this year, but we need to do it in a targeted and in a fiscally responsible way and in a fashion that doesn't undermine trust among one another and one that doesn't break trust with the American people by spending their money irresponsibly. I regret that that probably won't happen in the next few days, but I resolve to continue fighting for Hoosiers, for fiscal responsibility, and to constructively work with this administration however we can moving forward.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, last week we paused as a Congress to recognize half a million people who have died in the United States due to COVID. Unfortunately, that number is still climbing. Half a million. That is a lot of families that are affected. Those are a lot of lives lost. That is a lot of pain that we have experienced as a nation, and obviously that is a global pain that is being experienced.

Over the last now 11 months, this Congress has gathered in a bipartisan way five times, with wide bipartisan majorities, to be able to address the issue of COVID-19. We have allocated \$4 trillion, all of it borrowed, all of it—none of this was budgeted money—all of that borrowed money, with a common agreement that this is a pandemic and a crisis and that to be able to stabilize the American economy, we have to do what we have to do, but we should not do more than we have to, knowing that every dollar we are spending is borrowed.

Last year, at almost this exact same date, this Congress gathered together and put together a \$2 trillion CARES Act package. It was an aggressive package because we saw the shutdown of the American economy. Quite frankly, we saw the shutdown of the world's economy at that time period. Literally, the world seemed to stop by the end of March, and we all went into seclusion. We saw dramatic spikes in unemployment and desperate need around the country, but we all knew this was a crisis moment and we would get through it and we would get out of it.

Now, almost a year later, where we saw unemployment soaring to 15 percent-plus across the country, we are now at 6.7 percent unemployment. Every State is opened at some stage, and some States completely opened. Many schools are open. Some schools continue to stay closed and say they are afraid and that they are not going to reengage, while thousands and thousands of other schools around the country are open and taking care of their kids in person.

We have seen this patchwork of response, but one thing is very true about right now versus 11 months ago. We are in a very different place now, as an economy and as a nation, than what we were 11 months ago. But the strange thing is, now, 11 months later, my Democratic colleagues are putting forward a \$1.9 trillion package, almost the exact same size of what we had getting into the beginning of this. They are doing it. As just about everyone sees we are at the end, they want to borrow another \$2 trillion.

It is not just \$2 trillion to be able to spend toward COVID. I wish that were so. One percent of this package actually goes toward vaccines. Five percent of this package actually goes toward public health. In the school funding portion of it, 95 percent of the funding in the school funding portion of it, which is \$170 billion for school funding, won't even be spent this year at all—at all.

Let me run that past you again. Ninety-five percent of the \$170 billion allocated for funding for schools won't be spent in the year of the pandemic at all. It is future spending. To give you a picture of how big \$170 billion is toward education, the total U.S. education budget for the entire Department of Education this year is \$66 billion. For the entire year, for all of education in the whole country, it is \$66 billion, and my Democratic colleagues say: But we need to spend \$170 billion just for COVID, which, by the way, we are not going to even start spending until next year.

Do you know why? Because this bill is not about COVID. I wish it were, because there is real need out there. I wish it were. This is for things like \$350 billion to go to cities and States, to be able to bail out some of their pension funds and other things that are there.

Why do I say that? Because when you look at the statistics of the revenue loss for the States—across the entire United States, the revenue loss for all States is .1 percent from last year—.1 percent—not 1 percent, .1 percent change, because almost every State is dependent on property tax, and as people who pay property tax know, you are still going to have to pay your property tax. So the revenues, quite frankly, continue to stay strong.

In many of the cities that I have in Oklahoma—in fact, one of the cities in my State just last week reported their revenue for sales tax revenue is up 20 percent—20 percent, in their revenue—because people are staying home and shopping more. They are doing more shopping online, so the tax revenue is actually coming back into their States and their cities even more in many of these communities.

But there is \$350 billion allocated to these cities. You would think, well, there will be some fair distribution. Actually, that would be nice, but it is not true. They set up an unemployment formula that is based on, those States that shut down the longest and

kept everything closed the longest, they are the ones that actually get the most money.

So, in other words, if you reopened your economy and you worked to get your schools opened and you worked to get jobs opened, you get a chance to have very little support. If you stayed closed and kept your schools closed and kept your businesses closed, well, then you will get additional dollars coming in, regardless of what your revenue is—even for big States like California that their revenue actually went up last year.

Let me run that past you again. California's revenue went up last year. They get \$27 billion out of this, after their revenue went up.

Remember that, in the CARES Act last March, this Congress added \$150 billion to cities and States, \$150 billion, and spread that around the country to be able to cover it because there was a panic to think there were going to be major losses, but at the end of it, .1 percent off of the previous year.

This has additional funding for Planned Parenthood. I am not sure why abortion is needed for COVID relief, but they have additional money for Planned Parenthood included. They have a tunnel for San Francisco, which clearly is not COVID related, a bridge in New York State, \$50 million for climate justice grants. There are—on and on and on—all these additional things that are just stuck into the process.

And I would say this Congress has been active to be able to do what it takes to be able to help in every moment, but we have also tried to be wise in the process to say let's spend what needs to be spent when it needs to be spent.

Let me give you an example of that. As I mentioned, for vaccines in this particular bill, 1 percent is set aside for vaccines. That would be interesting except for the fact, in vaccines, the CDC has distributed only \$3 billion of the almost \$9 billion that Congress has allocated to the CDC for vaccine distribution. They still have almost \$6 billion remaining for vaccines right now.

They have spent only \$20 billion of the \$37 billion allocated for the vaccine treatment and development and testing—only \$20 billion of the \$37 billion for the actual development and treatment—still another \$6 billion remaining for distribution.

And on top of all that, today the Biden administration said they have struck new deals with vaccine folks so they can get vaccines to every single American by the end of May. They already have all that they need for vaccine distribution, development, and purchasing, yet this particular bill asks for billions more in vaccine because that sounds like a good idea—except, when you check the facts, they already have all they need for the vaccine purchase, development, distribution.

But it sounds good, kind of like, we need more money for education. It

sounds good when you say you need more money for education, except for the vast majority of the education funds, like around \$86 billion, is still unspent from the previous bills in education money that was sent.

For the ag money that has been allocated, \$26 billion for ag just done in December, only \$24 billion remains of that \$26 billion. In other words, ample funds are still sitting there for ag, for assistance for schools, for vaccines, for testing.

There is \$14 billion still remaining in the fund for testing, untapped. But my Democratic colleagues can go to the microphone and say we need money for schools and for vaccines and for testing. And everyone is like, "Oh, my gosh, certainly, we do," until you check the facts and find out this is not about vaccine and testing and schools at all. It is about all the pet programs that go with it, and it is about allocating billions and billions and billions of dollars to agencies so they can hold them and use them for other things.

That is what this is about, and it hides under the cloak of COVID, and it hides behind the pain of half a million Americans who have lost friends and family members.

Don't use their pain to be able to amp up government. Let's have the debate about issues that we need to have on government, but don't abuse the pain of Americans and pretend you are trying to fix something that we are not trying to fix.

I yield floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to join my friend and colleague from Oklahoma, as well as the Senator from Iowa, who has previously spoken, and the Senator from Indiana in opposing the Democrats' \$1.9 trillion spending bill.

The Democrats want to call it the sixth coronavirus bill. In fact, that is false. It is not a true statement because only about \$1 out of every \$11 being spent on this monstrosity is really focused on coronavirus health. The rest is a partisan liberal wish list that the Democrats have wanted to pass for a long, long time—long before the pandemic, long before anyone in this country had ever even heard of coronavirus.

I remember President Obama's Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, famously said: "Never let a good crisis go to waste." Well, that is what they did under President Obama. They saw a crisis. They passed laws that had nothing to do with what had caused it. And now here we are a dozen years later. President Biden is in the White House, and he is using that playbook once again.

President Biden's Chief of Staff calls this bill, the one coming to the floor right now—he described this on MSNBC the other day as—"the most progressive domestic legislation in a generation"—"the most progressive domestic legislation in a generation."

More progressive than ObamaCare, more progressive than the Obama-Biden stimulus—that doesn't sound like a coronavirus relief bill to me.

The White House Chief of Staff admits this isn't mainstream. This is radical. And you know, he is absolutely right about that. In the House, not a single Republican voted for this bill. Actually, Democrats joined every Republican in opposing it.

President Biden ran for President as being mainstream, as being a unifier. That is how he got to the Oval Office. But ever since then, it has been scorched-earth partisanship every day since that time.

Last week, President Biden gave a speech about the bill. He talked about Senate Republicans, those of us who are on the floor today and coming up next. He said: "What would they cut?"

I am very glad he asked. President Biden can start by cutting \$350 billion of bailing out States and local governments. State tax revenues are down less than 0.1 of a percent, as we just heard from the Senator from Oklahoma. Most States actually have more tax revenue than before the pandemic. Actually, 44 States have more tax revenue than before the pandemic.

President Biden could cut the \$85 billion that is earmarked for union pension funds, to bail them out. This has nothing to do with coronavirus. Unions have been mismanaging their members' money for decades.

President Biden can cut the \$4.5 billion for the New York City subway system. He could cut \$111 million for a subway system in Silicon Valley for NANCY PELOSI, \$270 million in funding for the arts and humanities. He could cut \$200 million from museums and libraries. That is not coronavirus. He could cut \$12 billion in foreign aid. He could cut \$36 billion in subsidized health insurance for people making over \$100,000 a year. It is a lot of income to additionally get health insurance subsidies.

We all know President Biden loves Amtrak. Well, he could cut \$1.5 billion in funding for Amtrak in this bill. That has nothing to do with coronavirus. He could cut \$1.5 million for the funding for the bridge from New York to Canada. It is probably a pet project for the majority leader.

To answer the President's question of what could we cut, we could cut a lot. Thankfully, the Senate Parliamentarian already cut \$67 billion from the bill. That is how much Democrats' national wage mandate was going to cost. Yet there is still a lot we can cut.

Here is the bottom line. The people of Wyoming, whom I visit with every weekend while I am at home, don't want to live with wish lists. They want to make sure they can stay at work, their kids can stay in school, and they get the virus behind them.

When I say "stay," that is because the kids in Wyoming have been in school since last August, in spite of the fact that it seems like only half the kids in America are back in school.

You can either get to yes or you can get to no. And the people in Wyoming wanted to get to yes when it came to getting kids back to school. What we see President Biden doing is saying yes to the teachers union. He has paid the ransom note, and this is the money being paid to them, not to get our kids to school but to keep the teachers unions happy.

I believe teachers want to get kids back to school. Teachers want to teach, but not the unions who pull the strings and are certainly pulling the strings of Joe Biden in the White House.

Working families don't want politicians to exploit a crisis for political gains. They want to protect their physical health and their financial health and well-being. So it is time to stop trying to exploit a crisis, which is what I see every Democrat doing. Let's give the American people what they really need all across the country—getting back to work, getting kids back to school who aren't there already, and putting the disease behind us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, before I speak, I ask unanimous consent that myself, Senator BRAUN, and Senator HIRONO be able to complete our remarks before the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WHISTLEBLOWER PROGRAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to compliment that the Commodity Futures Trading Commission operates a highly successful whistleblower program. As one of the Senators who led the effort to establish that whistleblower program back in 2010, I am proud of what this program has accomplished.

Since the Commission issued its first whistleblower award in 2014, whistleblowers have helped the Agency root out waste, fraud, and abuse in the commodities trading industry and has recovered nearly \$950 million. That is a very good reason to compliment the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. That is a lot of restitution for harmed investors. It is also a lot of money going to the U.S. Treasury and to the American taxpayers.

Now, if Congress doesn't act quickly, all of that progress could come to a swift and sudden halt.

Several months ago, the Commission contacted my office to tell me that its whistleblower program is facing the prospect of a sudden cash shortage—one that could require it to furlough staff and even close down its operations.

The reason for this potential shortage isn't that the whistleblower program has wasted or mismanaged funds or that it hasn't been doing its job. It is just the exact opposite. Whistleblowers have been approaching the Commission to report actionable claims of wrongdoing in far greater

numbers than before, and its whistleblower program has grown at a much faster rate than Congress expected when we created it in 2010.

Last year, the Commission issued a single whistleblower award for approximately \$9 million. In the past, it has given out awards for as much as \$30 million. Remember, this is money given out to find out about fraud so people can be punished, bringing money into the Federal Treasury.

As a result of these successes, in the near future the Commission faces the possibility of having to pay out several large whistleblower awards in close succession. Now, if that happens, the whistleblower program could run short of having the cash on hand that it needs to pay these awards and other office operating expenses. Again, this is not an issue of bad management. It just means that the program works better than we thought when we enacted it in 2010.

By law, the Commission is only allowed to keep a certain amount of cash on hand to pay out awards, and that amount is capped under existing law at \$100 million. Because Congress expected the program to remain relatively small, which it has not, it set the cap for the Consumer Protection Fund lower than the cap it has set for larger whistleblower programs, such as the one at the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The Consumer Protection Fund is also used to pay the operating expenses of the Whistleblower Office—in other words, the employees that follow up on these fraudulent claims.

Increasing the cap will ensure that the Commission can keep enough of the proceeds from the fines it collects on hand to pay whistleblower awards and also to ensure that the program itself doesn't run out of money.

In 2019, I introduced the Whistleblower Programs Improvement Act, which increased the cap on the fund and made several additional improvements to the program, including provisions that would allow the Commission greater flexibility to share information with law enforcement.

I did this because I realized that as the awards became bigger and more frequent, it was only a matter of time before the Commission would run into trouble. A year later, my prediction came true, and the Commission itself notified me of their impending money problems—those same money problems I am talking about.

I introduced a bipartisan bill, along with Senators HASSAN, ERNST, and BALDWIN, in December, just a few months ago, to quickly address this problem. I worked with then-Chairman Roberts and then-Ranking Member STABENOW to include language that would have made the most critical updates for the program in last year's omnibus. These updates would have ensured that the Whistleblower Office could keep enough funds on hand to pay upcoming whistleblower awards

and continue to fund the operation and to pay for staff.

What often happens around here is that this effort, unfortunately, also hit a roadblock, and the language wasn't included by the House of Representatives. Now, 2 months have passed since then and a matter that was already urgent in December has become even more critical right now.

The Commission told my office they have now completely stopped work on four cases, and these four cases potentially would have large awards. And if they get these large awards, it could bankrupt the fund. It is now a conflict of interest for staff who are still paid to even work on those cases because they know if they were to approve the large awards, it could mean putting themselves out of a job. That is totally unacceptable. Whistleblowers shouldn't have to wait just because Congress has been dragging its feet on this issue. That is why I reintroduced my bill and ask my colleagues to support this legislation to fix the cap and to protect this very successful whistleblower program.

This is a stand-alone bill, a very short and simple bill. It increases the cap on the Customer Protection Fund from \$100 million to \$150 million and requires that funds needed for the operating expenses of the Whistleblower Office be held in a separate account to ensure that the Whistleblower Office will have the resources it needs to continue employment of staff while the amount in the Customer Protection Fund builds to a higher level.

Allowing this successful Whistleblower Office to close simply because it is doing its job—a job well done—is unacceptable to me, and I hope it is unacceptable to the other 99 Members of this Congress. We ought to be able to get this bill passed quickly so that we can keep this successful whistleblower program going to protect the customers. It ought to be unacceptable, then, to every Member of this Congress. It is important that we act now to ensure that this doesn't happen. That is why I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bipartisan legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 294

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, today I rise to ask that the Senate grant unanimous consent to pass a bill that restores parents' rights to be part of medical decisions for their children.

More than 70 percent of Americans agree that parents should have the legal right to stop an abortion from being performed on their minor child. Consequently, more than half of the States have laws on the books that require some form of parental notification. Unfortunately, the State laws cannot be fully enforced when children travel over State lines or abortion providers assist minors in circumventing State laws.